

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

OF

EAST KERRIER.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

1919.

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ANNUAL REPORT

For 1919.

TO THE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF EAST KERRIER.

GENTLEMEN,

In presenting my annual report for 1919 I purpose following the memorandum issued to Medical Officers of Health by the Ministry of Health for their guidance concerning the contents and arrangement of their reports. The memorandum says that the size and scope of the reports will vary with the character of the district, and that the elaborate details of a report for a large city will not be necessary for a report of a small rural district. I shall therefore take the headings one by one as arranged in this memorandum, giving only such details, with remarks upon the same, as apply to this district.

Natural and Social Conditions of the District.

(1). "POPULATION."

The census of 1911 gave the population as being 8009. The "estimated" population of 1919 is 7345. This population represents the civilian population only, and does not include those, nominally belonging to this district, who were away on service. In the 20 years from 1891 to 1911 our population showed a loss of about 500: from 1901 to 1911 it fell from 8192 to 8009. As a consequence, the "estimated" population for each year must show a decrease upon that of the previous year, and so it continues until the next census year arrives.

Only then shall we know the true population of our district, and also whether we have decreased to the extent that the "estimating" scheme says we have. I am inclined to believe the opposite.

(2). "PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF
THE DISTRICT."

This district is essentially a rural one, containing no town within its borders, but consisting of seven parishes, each with one or more villages of greater or less importance, with scattered houses and hamlets between. In going from one village to another one cannot go far without coming across houses at frequent intervals, linking up one village with the other. The population is thus spread generally over the district. This is a striking characteristic of not only this district, but also of this part of the county, contrasting with what one sees in many other parts of England where, after leaving one village, one may go to the next without passing a house in the meantime. In this district this is accounted for in some parts by the main occupation of the dwellers in those parts. For instance, in the granite region, where quarries are scattered here and there, houses, perhaps one, perhaps three or four, will be found, situated so that the workers in the quarries may be conveniently near their work. In other parts, houses spring up as the result of the Cornishman's love for his old county. Few counties have sent more of their sons to foreign lands than Cornwall has, and especially the western end of the county. I believe I am right when I say that it is a rare thing to meet with a miner or granite worker, who has not, during some part of his life, been to some other country than his own. One and all, on leaving, cherish the hope that some day they will return to settle down in or near their old home. Many of course do not realise this hope, but many do, and with their savings build a house here, and one there. Scattered over the district are many instances of the truth of what I say.

This district is made up of hill and dale, limited on its south side by the English Channel, its harbours and estuaries. From these, valleys run back into the heart of the district, bounded by hills, which gradually rise as the limits of the district are reached, and then merge into neighbouring districts. These high-lands, as a rule, are the centre of the granite industry, whilst lower down, as the sea is approached, the land is a rich agricultural one. In the high-lands the chief occupation is naturally "granite." For the rest of the district the occupation is chiefly agricultural and market-gardening, until the sea border is approached, where considerable numbers are employed in fishing: whilst in the Helford River, in Flushing and Mylor, the oyster industry is carried on. Here and there are such industries as steam laundries, clothes factories, &c., which give employment to goodly numbers.

(3). "VITAL STATISTICS."

During the past year 106 births were registered, of which 66 were males and 40 females, giving an annual birth-rate of 13·85 per thousand inhabitants.

During the same period 101 deaths were registered, of which 52 were males and 49 females, giving an annual death-rate of 13·75 per thousand inhabitants.

The natural increase was 5. Of the total births 5 were illegitimate.

The birth-rate for England and Wales was 18·5. This in itself was very low: about the lowest on record. But ours, 13·85, was much below that, and is certainly the lowest I have ever recorded. It is well known that for some years before the war the national birth-rate showed a steady decline. Many reasons have been adduced for this, reasons which apply to this district as well as to the nation at large, and on which in former reports I have commented: but when, in addition, one considers how much the war, with the country drained of its

male population for a number of years, must have influenced such a rate as the birth-rate, the lowness of the national birth-rate in 1919, as well as of our individual rate, cannot be wondered at. However, from what one sees of things so far in this year of 1920, I think there is every prospect of this year's birth-rate showing a return to pre-war times.

The death-rate for England and Wales for 1919 was 13·8. Ours was 13·75, and is therefore practically identical with the national rate.

Of the total deaths 52, or rather more than one half, were of aged people : of these 26, or exactly one half, were well over 80, 5 approximating 100 years of age. This is a good record, and shows that anyone living in this district would have fairly justifiable grounds for complaint should he or she not in the end touch the century.

Another good record for 1919 is the low infantile mortality rate. There were 4 infantile deaths, giving a rate per 1000 births of 37·73. The same rate for England and Wales is 89. I consider this an extremely gratifying feature, for it is noteworthy that the infantile mortality-rate has always been regarded as one of the best criteria of the general sanitary condition of a community. Any measures directed towards reducing infantile mortality become of increasing importance every year, owing to the decline in the birth-rates already referred to.

Sanitary Circumstances of the District.

“ WATER.”

The water supply of this district is exceptionally good, meeting the wants of the inhabitants generally, and within easy reach as a rule. In Budock, that portion of the parish adjoining Penryn, as well as the similar portion of the parish of St. Gluvias, the supply is mainly derived from the main of

the Falmouth Waterworks Company, and is constant. The gathering ground of this Company extends over a large area, all of which is contained within the boundaries of this district. Some pollution of the collecting streams unavoidably occurs, as these streams on their way to the main reservoirs flow through highly cultivated and well manured fields, or through grazing lands with their herds of cattle. At all times, and especially after heavy rains, pollution from these sources must occur and cannot be prevented, but this is not pollution by human beings, and is such as can be dealt with by properly constructed waterworks, such as I believe the Falmouth Company's to be, with all their settling pools, filter beds, &c. The real danger, however, to this water arises from the human habitations upon the collecting area, whether in the form of villages and hamlets, or as isolated farm houses and cottages. That such a danger exists has long been recognised by this Council and considerable attention has been paid to the prevention of any possible pollution from such sources. Mr. Cox, the manager of the waterworks, is very keen in watching up the collecting area, and whenever, as he on several occasions in recent years has done, he has called the attention of this Council to a possible danger, this Council has at once attended to his wishes. The water supplied by this Company is regularly analysed, and the Analyst's report is invariably most satisfactory. In the rest of the district the villages are either supplied from springs, the water being piped, with stand-pipes at intervals, as in Ponsanooth, Mawnan Smith and Constantine, or there are one or more public pumps in each village. The more rural parts depend for their own private supplies on deep wells. Considerable attention is paid to all these to guard against the risk of pollution. I have in previous reports advocated an extension of the water-supply in Mawnan Smith to the eastern side of the village. A good many houses have been in late years erected on this side, and the schools are also situated there. All the conveniences in connection with this supply, in the shape of stand-pipes, &c., are at present on the western side. At a small expense the supply could be piped to

the eastern side, with a stand-pipe at the most convenient spot, and this would be much appreciated by those living on that side. I have also more than once referred to the Carlidnack supply. The supply is a good one, but for the majority of the houses in this locality it is at too great a distance: in dirty and wet weather the inconvenience of such a distant supply must be great.

At Flushing the supply is obtained from springs in the hill above the village, and is good in quality and quantity. There are two large storage reservoirs, from which the water is piped through the village. Many houses are connected with the mains, whilst stand-pipes are fixed at suitable points.

“RIVERS AND STREAMS.”

Beyond the river in Budock, which is polluted by sewage from both Budock and Penryn at the point of its discharge into Penryn harbour, there is no pollution by sewage of any of the main rivers of the district.

“DRAINAGE AND SEWAGE.”

The question of drainage in connection with one or more villages has been under the consideration of this Council during the past year. Most of the villages have drainage of some kind, dealing with certain portions of the village, the pipes emptying into settling tanks which are emptied at intervals, or in some places, where it is safe to do so, discharging their contents over a field: but none have one main system to take in the whole village. Something approaching this, however, was recently carried out at Burnt House, Mabe, where it was considered to be an absolute necessity, in order to prevent the possibility of any danger of pollution of the Falmouth water-works. The question of laying a main drain in the village of Constantine has been before the Council, with which the houses en route could be connected. At present certain

portions of the village have separate drainage, emptying into settling tanks : but this is all very "patchy." In the case of a main drainage scheme, taking in the greater part of the village, provision for dealing with the sewage at the outfall would have to be made, and this would need constant supervision. All this would entail such a primary and annual expenditure that it has been considered impossible in these times to meet. In order to minimise the need for such an outlay, it has been decided to do away with all midden-privies and substitute pail closets where advisable, to diminish the size of most of such middens as are allowed to remain as such, to see to the regular emptying of the pails and middens, and to attend to the general scavenging of the village effectually.

"CLOSET ACCOMMODATION."

This district being a rural one, the prevailing type of closet hitherto has been the privy-midden. All that one can say of this form of closet is, that in a rural district it is less of a danger than in an urban district. No sound reason can be advanced in its favour, and every effort, in the case of villages at any rate, should be directed towards the substitution of pail or earth-closets for the old type of closet, and then accumulations, which now are allowed to stand for a considerable time, would no longer exist. Such masses of decomposing and offensive matter close to dwellings, even if they do not give rise to specific diseases, cannot but exert a deleterious influence on the general health of the tenants, and especially of the children, who, like children, take a pleasure in dallying near the very spots they should particularly avoid. It must be also remembered that many of these foul cesspits are connected with drains, which in many cases are themselves not what they should be, perhaps only old stone-built drains, and that a slow and gradual deposit of filthy sewage matter takes place in these until, in the end, the whole length of drain from end to end, becomes merely an elongated cesspit. If such a drain passes under a house, as often happens, it is easy to imagine

what the result will probably be. Wherever it is possible the pail should replace the pit, and in truly rural parts, where houses are isolated and detached, or in the smaller villages and hamlets, where as a rule each house has a garden, each individual tenant can attend to his own pail and dispose of its contents in the garden : but in large villages it is just possible there may be a number of houses which have not sufficient garden space for this purpose, in which case it would be necessary for the Council to undertake the emptying, &c. of the pails by contracting with someone to do this. In Flushing, with the houses huddled together and with but few of them possessing any garden-space, the pail system has become more or less general, though even now there is room for an extension of this system. Of course considerable expense is incurred in working it, by having to contract for the removal, emptying and replacing of the pails, &c. : but it is well worth the expense, for whereas in years gone by, enteric fever was practically endemic in this village, for several years there has not been a single case in the place and due to the place. If this mode of disposal of human excrement prevailed throughout the district what an immense amount of decomposing and filthy material would be under the surface, to enrich the land and out of harm's way, which now lies on the surface, polluting the surrounding atmosphere and forming innumerable foci for flies to settle and breed upon, and from there to infect neighbouring larders, dairies, &c. I know what this Council has done already in Flushing and is at present doing in Constantine in this matter, and I hope the good work begun will be continued and made more or less general throughout the district.

Although this report refers to 1919, and to what has happened in that year, I cannot refrain from referring to something which really relates to this year of 1920. For years I have reported on the necessity of a public urinal in Flushing : difficulties as to a site, &c. delayed any steps being taken : but now I am glad to report that a suitable site has been obtained

and on it a public urinal has been erected. This will meet a long felt want.

“SCAVENGING.”

In each village in the district a man is appointed to scavenge regularly, and to disinfect when required. In Budock (Penryn), and in Flushing, the scavenging is done by contract. The sewage tanks for Chard, Penmere and adjoining terraces, as well as Glasney terrace, are systematically emptied by means of a sewage pump. A scheme for the draining of Chard, Penmere and Tregenver terraces has been drawn up and has been under the consideration of this Council, including treatment of the sewage at the outfall: but the execution of the same still hangs fire.

“SANITARY INSPECTION OF DISTRICT.”

During the year 242 houses and premises were inspected. 48 informal notices were served and 39 complied with. No statutory notices were served. As a result of action taken where defects were found:—6 new pail closets were provided or repaired, 9 drains were unchoked and repaired, 19 cess-pits cleaned or repaired, 10 accumulations of refuse, &c. removed, 2 removals of animals kept so as to be a nuisance, 2 houses drained, 2 yards cleansed, 2 drains smoke-tested, 5 drains—water tested, 8 wells cleansed, 1 new well sunk, 3 public pumps repaired.

“PREMISES AND OCCUPATIONS WHICH CAN BE CONTROLLED BY
BYE-LAWS OR REGULATIONS.”

There is no offensive trade in this district, except in the Parish of St. Gluvias, where there is a gut-cleaning industry. This is so situated that it can be of no offence to anyone.

“SCHOOLS.”

The sanitary condition of the schools generally throughout the district is good, and the water-supply satisfactory. The closure has been applied to the Flushing Schools for mumps and measles, and during the visitation of diphtheria to the Constantine girls' school: but I doubt if any good comes of such a step. It seems to me that the educational authorities look for the closing of a school as much for financial reasons as for sanitary.

“MILK SUPPLY.”

The regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order are in force. There are 82 cowkeepers and 46 dairymen. The total number of cows kept by all cowkeepers is 950. The average number of cows per individual cowshed is 11. The total number of inspections made (including inspections during milking times) is 96, and the number of surprise visits 20. The dairies as a whole are clean and well kept: they are relatively better than the cowsheds, for some of these are far from what they ought to be. These are receiving the attention of the Sanitary Inspector. All slaughter-houses and bake houses have been regularly inspected and their condition is good.

“SALE OF FOOD AND DRUGS ACT.”

Eight samples were taken during the year: five of these were found to be genuine, and three to be adulterated, for which fines were imposed.

“PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.”

There were 152 cases of Notifiable Infectious Diseases, made up of 39 cases of Diphtheria, Measles 61, Influenza 45, Malaria 6, and Erysipelas 1. These were distributed over the

several parishes as follows :—

CONSTANTINE	Diphtheria	26
	Influenza	35
	Malaria	4
	Erysipelas	1
MAWNAN	Measles	1
	Influenza	4
• MABE	Nil	
MYLOR	Diphtheria	4
	Measles	55
	Malaria	2
	Influenza	1
PERRAN-AR-WORTHAL ...	Diphtheria	4
	Influenza	4
ST. GLUVIAS	Influenza	1
BUDOCK	Diphtheria	5
	Measles	5

It will be seen from the above list that Mabe was the only parish with a clean slate. There were 2 cases of Enteric Fever, of sailors landed from ships, at the Port Sanitary Hospital, Kergilliack, both fatal. The cases at this hospital are not notified to me, but all deaths are included in the returns for this district. Practically all the cases of Measles were in Mylor : they were of a mild type with no deaths. The majority of the cases of Diphtheria were in the village and parish of Constantine, and were a continuation of the visitation of this complaint which began in 1915 and has only ended this year. Prior to 1915 it was rarely met with, a case occurring now and then : for such cases one could occasionally give a rational explanation on insanitary grounds, and sometimes, as with other complaints, one could not. But for the outbreak in Constantine, and for the length of time it continued there, one can only say that in the first place the complaint was probably introduced from a town outside our district, in which there were a large number of soldiers, among whom the complaint was very

general. When once introduced it remained, and though other cases occurred in neighbouring parishes the vast majority, as I have said before, were confined to Constantine. It was just possible that had we at the time the means for isolating the first cases the epidemic might have been nipped in the bud, but as we did not possess them we had to do our best in other ways. This outbreak naturally caused considerable expense to this Council, as well as a good deal of extra work to its officials. The village of Constantine, as I have before now reported, had sanitary defects, such as belong to most villages. From this point of view there was no reason therefore why Constantine should have suffered more than any other village. Nor were the cases all confined to the village itself, for many occurred in houses well away in the country, some of which were very isolated, whilst other cases occurred in other parishes: and in practically all these cases one could not attribute any to insanitary causes. The fact is the complaint first attacked certain children in the girls' school who subsequently infected others with whom they were brought in contact: many of these latter, though not developing the disease, harboured the germs, and thus became potential agents in maintaining the epidemic. Such individuals were what are commonly known as "carriers." It is the existence of these "carriers" in a community in which Diphtheria has once made its appearance which explains the extraordinary difficulty always experienced in stamping out this disease.

With regard to the 6 cases of Malaria they were all contracted abroad: in view of the fact that the particular species of mosquito (the anopheles), which alone is responsible for the spread of this disease, is not found in this part of the country, the danger of other cases occurring is "nil."

Of Influenza 45 cases were notified and there were 6 deaths. I have no doubt that there were many other cases of this complaint which did not come under the notice of medical

men. Leaflets, giving instructions with regard to this complaint in all its aspects, were very freely distributed by this Council throughout the district.

Of non-notifiable diseases during the year Mumps and Whooping were the only ones. Of Anthrax there were two cases, neither fatal.

“ MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.”

The inspection of midwives and the general arrangements for attending to the health of expectant and nursing mothers and children under five years of age are administered by the County Council through the County Nursing Association: the number of applications I have received for extra milk for expectant and nursing mothers are very few. The midwives leave with each mother a very useful pamphlet entitled “How to rear a baby.” For years before the notifications of births were transferred from me to the County M.O.H. it was my custom to send these pamphlets at all births in this district, and I am glad to see that the County Council continues to do so, for from personal knowledge I know that good has resulted. There is no period in the life of human beings which is so dependent on the care of others as that of baby-hood. All measures dealing with child-welfare should therefore be welcomed. In larger centres, however, it is possible to concert measures for dealing with the pre-natal state, as well as with baby-life, for in these it is more easy to “get at” the mothers, and no doubt more necessary, than in rural areas.

“ HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.”

As to hospital accommodation available for infectious diseases we are absolutely without anything of the kind. For many years we have provided a site for an Isolation Hospital, for which year by year a rent is paid, and a well has been sunk which provides an ample water supply. That is as far as we have got. It is unnecessary for me year after year to go

over the reasons which I have given in former reports as to why it is advisable and necessary that we should have such a place, either for this district alone or in conjunction with neighbouring districts. They are well known to you. All I can now do is to again bring this matter to your notice.

“HOUSING.”

The following details are in answer to questions included in the Ministry of Health memorandum:—The total number of houses in the district at the last census was 2001: the great majority of them are for the working classes: no new houses for the working classes have been erected, or are in course of erection. There is a certain shortage of houses, and it is contemplated to meet this shortage by the erection of 69 new houses in the district. There are some cases of overcrowding, but it is impossible to deal with them because, if the people are turned out, they are at present unable to find anything more suitable. The general standard of housing is fair, though a number are either damp, or have no drainage, or the yards are badly paved, or the windows cannot be opened for proper ventilation. Repairs have been carried out in many instances to walls, ceilings, floors, roofs, and many windows have been altered, so as to open both top and bottom. The total number of dwelling-houses that have been inspected is 967. The number found unfit for human habitation 22. The number of houses which, after repairs are carried out, can be made fit 63. Number of informal notices served 20: number complied with 9. Number of closing orders, none.

I have the honour, Gentlemen, to remain,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES BLAMEY.